

Hel's Bounty Hunter

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Summary: Several dangerous spirits escape the Underworld as their unknown leader causes havoc in three realms. A queen brings in descendent of a legendary hunter, a wicked son interferes with the lives of the local school, and a king awakens to battle with forces beyond him. Rated T for suggestive themes, violence, and psychological warfare. Modern AU with Norse Mythology.

1. The Chase

It's an eerily familiar nightmare the Hunter was full aware of as it occupied the heavens above. Neither the blonde woman nor caped man on either side of him could console him- the Hunter being their only chance of winning the current battle. The knowledge he'd just acquired should've given him the confidence to strive on. But his base terror was rearing its head. Just like any of documented bad dream of his, the Bounty Hunter's misplaced sense of science had no power to rationalize his anxiety.

"Where's your science now?" The caped man lightly joked. In truth, albeit his intimidating armor, he was aware of his limitations.

"Knock it off." The blonde hissed. Their objective wasn't impossible, but messing with the youngest champion wouldn't help the situation.

The youngest champion rolled his shoulders, trying to appear calm, but his mind was jumbled. With science, there is law, a safe haven for the Hunter considering the fear he had deep inside despite all of his accomplishments the last few months.

An active volcano, in the sky, about to erupt. Wanna know the kicker? It's upside down.

* * *

><p>Chapter One - The Chase

"Ms. Bateman?-"

Said teacher started and turned to see who might've taken years from her life. "Oh! Hectorâ€¦|please don't sneak up on me like that."

Hector had actually been standing behind her up until the starting bell rang. He's gotten used to being the ghost kid of the school; nobody knew he was there until they were spooked. Anyway, Hector placed his homework on her desk and left to his seat in the front.

This invisible kid thing has become a real problem due to most of the teachers not realizing he's been in class the whole time and counted him as absent. He was almost held back until his father, the principle, saw his report card and wondered why it said absent. He saw his son attend school everyday walking the halls. The solution was for Hector to sit in front and be sure to hand in his work to face to face with the teacher.

Hector's knee buckled. Gripping the edge of the desk before he tipped over, Hector fixed his jaw. _Almost invisibleâ€¦|_ Hector peered over to the middle of the class where seated in the middle of the classroom was his cousin, Stewart, armed to the teeth with rubber bands. One which must've thwacked the back of Hector's knee, causing his recent imbalance.

The twins, Teddy and Ronnie couldn't have been more unlike. While Ronnie seemed to have control in their sibling relationship with her outspoken personality, Teddy was hardly seen with her. His whereabouts were unknown to anyone but his teachers' who grade him solely on his perfect attendance.

Frankie seemed to be at a crossroads in which status quo he chose to be in. Pranking Hector and/or being his usual project partner.

Stewart never let up on his pranks. It was all supposed to be a way to show his relationship with Hector in his own way. He wasn't all that bad, but the pranks were as consistent as his attempts to date the blonde he and Hector both had a crush on.

Ash Hofferson. Not much can be explained due to the fact that she doesn't socialize with males. And even less so with her female peers. All there is known about her is that she has a goal to compete in every club offered in the school. From gymnastic to debate.

Hector turned on his heel to get to his seat and pay attention to Ms. Bateman's resumed lesson. Hector winced when he felt a rubber band bounce off the left temple. Instead of ignoring Stewart, Hector bent over in his seat and picked up the band, twisted it in his hand, and shot it directly at Ash's direction in one swift motion. Without confirming if he hit the mark or not, he casually opened his book and got to the assigned page of the textbook.

Ash twitched when she felt a band hit her on her neck. She turned to the left and glowered at whoever could've flicked it at her.

Hector gave a quiet snort when he saw Stewart rush to shove off the pile of rubber bands from his desk from the corner of his eye.

* * *

><p>It was lunch, the smell of the barely-legal food was horrid, the volume of the cafeteria was deafening, and the crowd that didn't see him as invisible was sitting around him, bantering.<p>

"That new challenge course Gordon came up with is impossibleâ€|" Frankie complained, his dislike for anything the gym offered only increased when the Physical Ed. Coach, Gordon, came up with a more endearing course. "No, its 5 multiplied by 10 and then add 2. Yeah, now it's an improper fractionâ€|" Frankie turned back to tutoring Ronnie with her workbook.

"I think the rock wall portion is pretty awesome. I'm not even sure how Gordon got that part signed off by the school's board of education." Teddy grinned at the thought of a fifty foot wall towered over the rest of the course.

"It's not that hard, actually. I beat it on my first try." Stewart boasted as he stole glances at Ash walking through the lunch line. He was too busy gawking to notice Hector _poison _his drink.

When Ash came out of the line, Stewart straightened in his seat. "Hey, Ashâ€|"

The moment Ash glanced Stewart's way, her nose scrunched up, disturbed at the sight.

Stewart paled and looked away until she passed. He then frantically requested a mirror from Ronnie. "What, is there something of my face-

Ronnie looked up from her work and she cracked a small toothy grin. She dug through her bag and handed him a small mirror.

The rest of the table started laughing when Stewart finally realized what Hector had done.

Stewart's teeth were crimson, as if his gums were bleeding. But it was just the food coloring Hector snuck into his milk.

Hector's small smile broke into a wide grin before dodging Stewart's retaliation swing.

"No more pranking when Ash is within twenty yards of usâ€|" Stewart muttered as he got up to throw away his ruined milk.

Hector made to utter a contrite apology, but he felt something. There was a feeling as if someone was watching him. He was about to scan the cafeteria, but thought against it. It was a huge room filled with shifting teenagers. Besides, the chill left the moment he became aware.

"Hector!"

Hector jumped in his seat and looked around his table. He noticed

three things, (1) Gordon towered over our table with a grin, (2) Ash was to Gordon's side, glaring at him and Stewart for some reason, and (3) Stewart appeared tense.

"What--"

"We're doing Gordon's challenge." Stewart couldn't contain his excitement.

How did Hector get thrust into this situation?

* * *

><p>"Why am I here?" Hector shifted awkwardly as he stood at the starting line along with Stewart and Ash. The inappropriate length of the gym pants the school offered shouldn't even be legal. And the shirts, geez, the person in charge of gym clothes should get a criminal background check.<p>

"Because of all of your athletic qualities," Gordon stated, off to the side tinkering with the scoreboard control mechanism. He was resetting the timer among other things to prepare his personalized P.E. course. Without glancing up, he explained further why he chose the three teenagers before him.

"Speed," Gordon pointed to Ash, "endurance," regarding Stewart, "and reflexes." Gordon ended with the lanky teen.

While the other two seemed content with the praise of their abilities, Hector held his with remorse. He thought back to the time he could've shown his athletic quality. He came up with nothing but the question of how Gordon could've possibly known or if he was just trying to incite him.

"Is this voluntary--"

"It is mandatory." Gordon cut Hector off with a dull expression.

"Come on, Hector. This is gonna be awesome." Stewart tried to get his cousin on the same high as him. He leaned over and whispers, "Whoever wins gets to date herâ€|" Stewart pointed a thumb over his shoulder at Ash, attempting to fuel Hector's determination. Stewart was wondering why Gordon had chosen Hector specifically out of all the students in the school. He was curious to see why the respectable coach handpicked the three of them out of the whole school.

Hector peered over to the girl who stared ahead to the challenging course with an almost amused expression. Would she acknowledge him if he won?

"I guess since it's mandatory, I have no choiceâ€|" Hector shrugged his shoulders before getting into a starting stance.

Stewart grinned before getting ready too. "I'm in it to win."

Ash remained quiet.

Gordon was grinning like a madman. He thought Hector would be trouble, but it worked out somehow. "You start in three," Gordon

started the countdown, "two," he peered over his shoulder to see that the person who set this all up sat himself down in the wooden bleachers. "One!"

Ash shot forward with inhuman speed while Stewart and Hector watched, stunned.

The man in the bleachers appeared to make sense of what exactly Ash did. She only lunged forward a few feet before sprinting ahead. _Impressive_.

Stewart shook himself out of it first and bolted after her.

"Hector, move!" Teddy shouted from the bleachers.

Hector jumped into gear and tailed after his competitors.

The first part of the course was about twenty feet of hurdling. The current leader slowed her pace, Stewart was forced to decrease his speed drastically in order to not run right through the course, and Hector, well, he ran _around_ the hurdles and came up next to Stewart at the end.

"That's cheating!"

"I didn't hear Gordon specify on any rulesâ€¦" Hector grinned.

"Maybe because of a little something called conscientiousness-"

"That's a big word," Hector's grin grew wider, "if you can spell it, I'll turn back and complete the hurdles."

Caught off guard, Stewart stuttered, "That's not the point- shut up!" he then turned away from his annoying cousin and pushed himself to put some distance between them.

The three teenagers in the bleachers joked and laughed at Stewart and Hector bantering in the middle of the competition. The mysterious stranger a ways from them cracked a small smile.

Stewart turned back to what was next and paled. Up ahead was a 20-foot warped wall. The wall was like a skating ramp, but one side of it was higher than the first. The challengers would have to someone scale the warped wall. _Who is funding this?! Stewart's thoughts screamed in his head. Then he remembered who was leading the course. His eyes followed Ash closely to see how she would go about the wall.

Ash didn't stop her momentum and jumped up beginning side of the ramp, tensed her legs and jumped. Her small body somehow soared in the air and she latched on to the top of the warped wall. Ash scampered up the edge and continued with the course, descending down the knotted rope on the other side of the wall.

Stewart shook his head before preparing to take the traditional route by running up the wall. Right as he was about to slip, he reached out and gripped the edge. After pulling himself up, he took a quick breather and looked to see how his cousin was faring so

far.

Stewart's eyes widened and he took a step back as Hector somehow flew up the wall, using the same strategy Stewart used, and landed in front of him. Hector then continued to scale down the knotted rope.

Hector smiled as he briefly saw Stewart's expression, but paused when he saw that Ash was stuck in the web. Apparently, she could go _too _fast sometimes. Ash was currently tangled in the rope. As soon as he jumped off the webbed rope, Hector returned to running.

The second to last part of the course for that day was the skipping step exercise. Basically, it was an area that had slanted steps protruding from the ground that one needed to skip-step on in quick succession to keep the momentum to make it to the end. If you fell, you fell. But Gordon, being the questionably certified P.E. instructor, had somehow gotten some powder laid out on the ground. A sign on the side of this portion of the course stated, "Itchy Powder!"

Hector hitched a breath and almost tripped himself. Falling into that powder while wearing the gym clothes would be a nightmare. _Only Gordon would devise something like thisâ€¦| _Hector shook himself and picked up his pace until he was breaking into a wild sprint.

Ash, annoyed at the fact of losing her lead, finally got untangled and was about to go after Hector, but she suddenly jumped backwards.

Stewart, in third place, thought not to waste anymore time, disregarded the rope web and jumped down to the floor below. He almost landed atop of Ash had she not moved out of the way. Rolling from his landing, Stewart stood up and gave a quick wave to Ash before breaking out to sprint after Hector.

Ash narrowed her eyes and went after the two.

Right as Hector jumped off another step, that feeling from the cafeteria came back, stronger this time. In the air, mid-skip, Hector turned to see who could've been giving him this feeling. Just in time, Hector saw Stewart and Ash foolishly trying to overtake him as they were a mere foot away from them.

Gordon slapped his forehead and groaned. He was about to witness all three crash into themselves and end the course right before the finish line. He shook his head and pointed an apologetic look towards the man in the bleachers.

The seated man shook his head and directed Gordon's attention back to the competing teenagers.

Gordon, confused, turned back to the course. Watching, he wondered what was about to happen. Hector was in the middle of the skipping portion of the course while Stewart and Ash were rushing towards him. Gordon knew about Hector's reflexes, but how could he fare while in mid-air?

Instinctively, Hector acted.

* * *

><p>Hector, like his other rivals, held a permanent frown the rest of the school day. At the last part of the race, all of them were just about to finish when just then, Stewart and Ash came in too hot. Hector barely managed to somehow balance himself on a single step, but Stewart's frame somehow tripped himself mid-step as he frantically reached out for something to grab onto. Ash and Hector were roughly pulled down with Stewart in a giant heap, creating a cloud of itchy powder for all competitors.<p>

Unfortunately, all three of them failed the challenge course and even after an extended shower, the rash was still irritating various spots of their bodiesâ€|Even some unmentionable areas thanks to the gym clothes.

Hands stuffed in his pockets, shoulders shrugged down, and sporting a hunch and glare, the trio stood brooding at the bus stop. Due to their stay after the bell rang for another round of scrubbing, Hector, Ash, and Stewart missed the school bus and had to wait for either parental pick-up or public transportation.

Stewart tried to lighten the tense mood. "So, uh, what did you guys think of the course, huh?" Hopeful eyes darting from Hector to Ash. Receiving a steady incredulous stare and a dignified sniff, Stewart dejectedly continued, "Yeah, it was kind ofâ€|"

"Stupid," Hector rolled up his sleeves and started scratching his forearms.

"A waste of time and tax dollars." Not really comfortable around the two, Ash didn't urge to claw her rashes. But there was the casual rubbing of the back of her left shin with her right ankle every few seconds.

"Gordon's not gonna let us live it down the rest of the year, is he?"

"Nope."

Stewart stood in the middle of the two having their first conversation. Well, it was more of a first for Ash. He was about to join in, but Ash suddenly turned and broke into a jog. Guess she didn't want to wait on the bus any longer and pretend not to be bothered around her two peers.

Just as Ash turned a corner, a police cruiser appeared down the street. It came to a stop in front of the bus stop. The passenger side window rolled down and a man whose gut was wedged between his lap and the steering wheel struggled to lean over and open the passenger door. "Get in," barked an officer from the inside.

"Hey, Dad." Stewart slipped off his pack and clambered in. "Could you drop off Hector too?"

"With me in the driver's seat, you in the passenger, I don't see how Hector here could come with usâ€| That is, if he doesn't have a problem sitting on the gear-stick? You swing that way, Hec?" Saul Jorgensen pulled down his glasses, regarding his nephew, studying on his facial indicators for the truth.

Hector resisted to roll his eyes in the reflection of the officer's metal silver sunglasses. He saw the man last weekend for a barbeque held at his house. He didn't know why his uncle persisted to treat him like a stranger every time in person or the random questions of manlihood.

Stewart sensed his cousin's annoyance and jumped in, "Why don't you just sit in the back?"

Hector thought of the idea of rolling into the driveway of his house in the back of police cruiser. His father would be livid, even if it was his brother dropping the teenager off. Hector denied the offer, avoiding the harassment he would've probably received during the ride, and waved a goodbye.

As his potential ride peeled away from the curb and pulled a U-turn, Hector watched and groaned when he realized that he would now have to shuffle home with a still-flaming rash.

* * *

><p>"Ugh!" A sixteen year old slammed into a grimy alley wall and slid down as he raised a hand to nurse his head. He groaned when he felt something warm and slippery in his mopyy strands of hair. I'm started to regret turning down Stewart's offer for a ride home. Hector nursed his head. Surely, he would've had a better chance of making it home in one piece he was in a police cruiser.

Regrettably, the teen worsened his situation by opening his mouth for the fifth time, much to his attacker's annoyance. "Look, I already told youâ€|I've had a miserable day at school today. Can't you find it in your scarring childhood repressed-memories heart to cut me some slack- Ah!" The brunette hissed after he got a rough rap against the left side of his face. A simple wrinkle of his nose deemed positive to damaged cartilage.

"Shut your mouth, milk-drinker." The lunatic appeared to be confused of what century he was in. His arms and legs were adorned in mail armor, some sort of leather guarded his torso, and various animal pelts covered the man head to toe. Also, the man had a strange assortment of chains and necklaces. The teenager could've sworn he'd seen an outfit like this when he was briefly studied Norse mythology.

"You'll soon realize your fate once 'Milady arrives with the fury and vengeance of a thousand burning souls that were quelled ahead of their liking. Her voice like those screaming for repentance for their sins! Oh, how it is glorious to see her righteous balance of cool fiery ire. Praise the-

"Whoa, you got a little brown on your nose there, pal-HA!" The boy barely dodged the incoming punch. A small smile graced his features as his attacker's fist connects with the concrete alley wall and the gruff man roared in pain. The boy laughed. He figured out the man's pattern of attack and proved it when he got a rise out of the man. "And I was right. You do have some sort of vendetta against my nose. What did I do? Sneeze on your puppy or something?"

"You prattling son of a wench!-" The man poised to strike to save his dignity after being fooled. But something strange happened.

The teenager had thrown up a defense but lowered his arms when he felt something shift from under and around him. The student watched in disbelief as dust began to rise from the ground and soon began to take mass before his eyes. He peered over to the man to see if it was his doing, but the man appeared just as spooked as the boy did. The man's eyes held something else._ No, not afraid. _The boy's eyes widened. _Aware._

It all became apparent to the both of them. _It's not dust._

Shadows. _Impossible_. They were currently ensnaring the man as he slowly began to lose his demeanor. He knew something _magical_ was happening whether the boy believed it or not.

"No, my Queen! This fool might not have been on the Stone, but his lineage-" The man held his breathe as the magical black sand started to snake around his body, tightening around his ankles, the back of his knees, wrists, elbows, and finally his neck. While the ropes were gently floating above the man's skin, they suddenly constricted.

Hector was motionless as he watched the man gurgle out desperate pleas to his 'Queen'. The teenager could've got up and ran away, limped away, but he felt like he was ensnared as well. The boy jumped when he heard a sickening crack and witnessed that the man's neck could now longer support his head. The body jerked in unnatural directions before pausing. The sand fell instantly and disassembled itself as it blew away in the sudden wind shift.

The man was deathly still. His body showed no signs of his passing. There was no peace or pain. Just an uneasy tense feeling radiating from him. The boy stared at the body with concern. Until the man's body finally moved. Uh, twitched.

Slowly, purple mist started to escape from the corners of the man's lips until it took the form of a head. The head materialized into a familiar face. This one wasn't peaceful, but frantic. Confused. Until it noticed his injured victim still sitting there. Turning all of its attention to the boy, the head fell to the boy's eye level.

They stared at another for a few seconds. There was an eerie silence as the head drifted closer and closer to the boy's own. The boy didn't even react when the man's head unintentionally bumped against his. It seemed like they both had an understanding of what just transpired a moment ago and came to a conclusion. The bodiless head just acted first.

"RUN!"

The boy spooked out of his stupor before scrambling to his feet and bolting out of the alley. By the time he was at the end of the alley, his nerves were shot. There was still a chance that that _sand_ wouldn't just stop with the man, but come after him as well.

The fact that the boy knew he wasn't exactly remotely an athlete of any sense made him regrettably take his usual shortcut through the

community park trail that lead to his house.

A community center- a rest area in the middle of the park next to the play area- came into view and the boy found the energy to run faster.

It was unknowingly becoming pitched black despite it being late afternoon a few moments ago. The darkness was chasing him, devouring the moon and stars that would usually appear in the night.

The teenager burst through the entrance doors and quickly lunged for the door to the center's main room. Lunging into the room, the boy slid under the tables and waited.

The boy crouched under the table waiting for what he thought was an eternity. It was a full three minutes before he finally calmed down and realizing his choice of hiding spots was a poor one.

There were no windows, no signal for his phone, and only one door. This community center had just been built and opened a few months ago. The neighborhood was stuck in the between middle-class and high-class, so there should be no reason why the structure of the center was poorly designed. The boy thought it was rather dumb of the architect to build a death room in the boy's case.

Before the teenager could continue to mentally downsize the building designer, the lights shut off due to inactivity in the room. The teenager frowned and thought about moving to another table so the lights would switch on, but right before he moved, his peripherals caught a shadow pass through the slit of the bottom of the door. The teenager froze and pondered whether or not it was real or just his nerves acting up again. His eyes hadn't fully adjusted to the sudden darkness yet.

Then something clicked from behind him. A beep came. The temperature in the room started dropping.

The teenager jumped and fumbled for his phone. Once he got it and switched it on, he held his breathe. It was low on battery and a friendly female voice said goodbye before the phone shut off. He could've sworn his heart started beating irregularly and he could hear it pounding in his ears.

The boy, as silently as he could, breathed in and out. Slowly, but surely, he succeeded in calming down. He fantasized of the safety he had in the dark room. _It's not a dark alley. It's the community center. People. From this timeline. 21__st__ century. Science. _The key word for the boy. With science, there is law. With his light thinking, the boy rationalized what may or may not happen.

Nothing came to mind. What theory or hypothesis could explain what just happened to him? A man killed by flying sand and then his ghost staring him down. All in an alleyâ€| where not even a soul passed the entire timeâ€| That last thought was unsettling to the boy.

There was a shifting sound. Like someone shifts their hand throughâ€| _sand_.

The room sensed movement and the lights flickered on one by one. The sudden light unfocused his eyes. The boy shielded his eyes and

squinted with hope that it was a janitor or something. As long as it was human with an understandable occupation. Not like beating up students in some Viking costume.

There was a thump and then clicking, like nails or heels prowling about. As the sound continued with a steadiness, the boy had come to realize that a janitor with high heels didn't seem believable. Or even a night guard for that matter. His eyes now adjusted to the light, he looked around from under the table.

The sand was back and had taken a different form as it slinked around the room, searching for something, someone. It didn't have a certain shape of any of the animals the boy knew of, but it did have claws.

Suddenly, the _beast_ locked on to the boy's location. If it had eyes, it'd be glaring right at him.

The boy made for the door; he managed to touch the doorknob before the sand slithered around his ankle and gave a tug. Then his left wrist, next, his waist. The sand latched onto the boy until he couldn't balance himself and fell to his knees.

Lying on the floor, the boy felt himself being dragged closer and closer to the formless creature. On the floor in front of the creature was a bright purplish whirlpool. Seeing that particular color sent the boy into a frantic state. He hopelessly tried to claw away on the smooth tile floor.

The closer he got to the rapidly shifting purple whirlpool, the more desperate he got. He started screaming his lungs out for someone. Anyone that's in the park or remotely near it that could realize the supernatural events taken place inside the center.

The boy stilled when his foot connected something solid. He peered over his shoulder just in time to see the head of the beast gather the sand the boy had just kicked. The boy paled when he saw the beast somehow regard him with annoyance.

Before he knew it, the boy was thrown in the air and then slammed into the door by a strange force. His face met the heavy door and he lost consciousness. Being dragged away to the portal was his last memory before blacking out.

* * *

><p>"Wake up, Hector! Wake up- Mom, what's wrong with him?"The voice sounded like it belonged to a teenage girl.

"_I don't know, sweetie. Are you alright?" _The voice of an older woman asked, shaking Hector's shoulder.

"_He's waking up!" _

Hector slowly opened his eyes to groggily regard what he guessed was a mother and daughter. He couldn't recall why lying on a bed. Once his eyes focused, he stilled at the sight of the two people to either side of him. It was his older sister Mikaela and their mother. Hector reached out to see if Mikaela was real or not.

Mikaela regarded Hector with intrigue as he reached out to grip her arm. Hector jumped, causing her to mirror him, when he felt that she was, in fact, real.

"This isn't possible-" Hector twitched when he felt someone laid their hand on his forehead.

"What isn't possible, sweetheart?" His mother consoled him.

Without even thinking, Hector suddenly pushed Mikaela away and stood up to face them from the foot of the bed. Unfortunately, having sudden movements without adjusting made him tipsy. Then he remembered that this was the second time he's injured his head that night.

"Hector, calm down before you fall again," Mikaela looked at him with worry.

With her expression alone, Hector knew something was off. It was then that he realized where exactly he was.

It was his old room. In the old house he and his father moved out of shortly after the freak accident.

The two of them being here, in the old house, Mikaela actually caring about him, nothing had yet to make sense. They both died years ago, but here they were, alive. How did he end up here when he was at the community center-?

Hector's eyes widened as he scanned the room for a door. Finding none, he saw a window and bolted for it. Frantically messing with the window locks, he finally got it open. He didn't even have to think about how high the fall would be. The fact that that beast could come back at any moment fueled Hector to climb out.

He froze when he saw just how high the leap would be.

It was nothingness. Everywhere was black. Like it was a void. No streetlamps, no building lights, no stars in the sky. The only thing waiting for him at the bottom was a massive pool of shifting purple. But then, there it was! The black sand that somehow made itself prominent in the darkness. It was staring right back at Hector as if it were assessing whether or not Hector was crazy enough to jump.

Hector fell back into the house, backing away from the window. When he turned back to his revived family, he saw that they were gone. A new figure sat on the bed Hector had woken up on.

The woman appeared to be in her late 20s, wore only a dark green dress with strange black symbols etched into the fabric, dark cerulean blue neck armor and gauntlets. Her eyes didn't have irises, just glowing white. Her face as had a blue hue to it. Her hair was cut short and a Widow's peak seemed to end just before the space of where her eyebrows would've been. But the real eye-catcher was the crown she wore. Hector couldn't quite catch it in the act, but he was sure it was twitching.

Realization came to Hector as he inched away when he saw that her crown was black sand.

"Sit down." The being directed with a stern tone. She offered a spot on the bed inches from where she sat.

Hector found it unsettling that her tone didn't quite match her suggestion. Thoughts of jumping to his death came to mind instead of being anywhere near the woman.

The woman saw the hesitation and revised her command. "Sit down unless you want a bad experience in the Underworld as a first."

With that ultimatum, Hector only had two choices. Get a head-start on his bad experience by deciding to instead lunge out the window or humor the strange woman. Reluctantly, Hector shuffled towards the bed, but sat down at the foot of the bed, keeping his distance.

For a few moments, the woman studied Hector with scrutiny, causing the teenager to edge away slightly. "You are an inquisitive one, aren't you?" The woman finally spoke. "A mortal breaking his own strong desires so easily with analysis. Impressive."

Hector ignored her praise. "Where am I and who are you? Why am I here?"

The woman took her time answering the question "Hel." She finally supplied.

"What?"

"You are in the underworld, land of the dead souls in suspended animation of their sole desires. You will address me as Hel, ruler of this land. And I've brought you here to offer you the honor of hunting down several highly dangerous spirits that have recently escaped this Nirvana."

"Well, your highness, I'm not interested in being your, what did you call it? Mercenary? If it was any other day- maybe when I skipped on my medication- I would've accepted your deal. But right now, I want to get in a bath and scrub off the remaining itching powder that's been killing me all day." Hector stood and walked over to the window. Maybe if he clicked his heels twice for good luck, his jump to the swirling void down below would send him home.

Hel didn't move to stop him. "I assumed you wanted to exact your own vengeance on those who widowed your father and robbed you of a sister as well." Hel left the bait hanging, waiting for him to pull at it.

Hector stilled. "That's not funny."

"What would I gain from jesting you?"

"What would you gain from kidnapping me?"

"I'd gain a new champion to reap the souls of those-"

"Yeah, I got it." Grim reaper in spandex." Hector held his hand up before he had to hear it all over again. He sat down on the windowsill and actually contemplated the goddess' offer. For the life of him, he couldn't remember remotely anything about his mother or

sister.

He was still wondering how he portrayed their personalities, or even their faces, when his father said they both passed when he was only 4 years old. Did he imagine what they would act like? Or did this world just rip a memory out and work out the kinks?

"If I accept, will you send me back so I can think about this?"

"No. Either you accept and become my champion or you fall under a stronger trance for eternity."

"And choice C isâ€¦" Hector received a steady stare of impatience. "Fineâ€¦ Whatever gets me out of this place."

* * *

><p>The world outside the house hadn't change at all. It seemed like the two of them were walking through darkness. Although Hector couldn't visibly see anything in the distance, as he peered down his body, he could see his toes despite there being no light source. When they first stepped out of the house, Hector waited for the equivalent of the sun to appear once Hel stepped foot outside, but nothing appeared to change. He asked for a flashlight- or a torch since he remembered how out of date his attacker's clothes were- but Hel denied his request, saying, "Everyone's asleep. It would be rude to wake them."<p>

Hector gave her a look 'Seriously?', but the ruler of the underworld already turned and started walking away. Hector muttered something before he moved to catch up with her. He'd lose her in the darkness, effectively himself, if he wasn't careful.

Still wary of the queen, Hector chose to walk behind her instead of to her side.

It couldn't have been more than a couple of minutes of walking when Hel suddenly waved her hand and large doors materialized, slowly gliding open. Hector followed the goddess into the palace, gazing around in wonder. Aged armor and weaponry bedecked the walls, rust shining harshly in the light.

"Now then, Hector," Hel called, grabbing his attention.

She strode over to a wooden mannequin donned with strange apparel, and turned to look at her champion for a while. Finally, she beckoned him with a slight wave to come closer to the gear.

"What's with the get-up?"

"It's the armor you'll be using to effectively hunt the escaped spirits. Don't be fooled, it has powerful properties." Hel added the last part when she saw the dull look Hector gave her.

The material didn't resemble any shining armor Hector has ever seen before. The wooden doll held a simple dark blue laced robe with a hood, a breast pocket plate slung over its chest. The torso of the robe was wrapped in black chain mail and some grayish plating on the shoulders and forearms, the obsidian pants seemed to droop to the ground-not currently being supported by a belt- but regrettably

appeared to be form-fitting. Lastly, sitting under the doll were a pair of high boots with some pieces of shin armor. The first thing that came to his mind was Knights of the Round Table, not some old leather robes.

Hector nodded his head in thought. "Am I being punished?" Hector asked bluntly.

Hel was walking away from him before she punished for asking dumb questions. "Get dressed; you're trying my patience today."

Brooding, Hector snatched the robes off the mannequin and began undressing. He stopped when he noticed that Hel was still in the room facing him. "You mind?"

"No."

Hector came to an understanding that Hel was from a totally different time and world. A place where watching minors undress isn't uncomfortable. "Could you at least turn around?"

"I'm perfectly fine where I am as of now."

"Leave the room."

"This is my room."

"Why are you so bent on seeing me with no clothes on?"

"Don't flatter yourself. I'm aware of a mortal's anatomy. You are no different from the countless others I've seen."

Hector was about to respond, but Hel put her foot down. "I am still here because you are about to don an outfit with powers your mortal capacity of understanding couldn't handle." Hel raised her voice. "No more of this pointless conversation. Strip now."

"Bossy predator!" Hector muttered under his breath as he stiffly did what he was told.

While Hector hastily pulled on the pants, Hel turned and pulled a hidden latch on the wooden doll's abdomen area. She stepped up to Hector just as he flipped the heavy hood back and magically attached various weapons and tools to the armor. "There," Despite being irked at their earlier banter, Hel regarded Hector with a nostalgic expression. "You're almost ready, champion. In time, you will learn your inner power that will help you in your search and eradication of your enemies."

"I get powers?!" Hector perked at the potential skills he could get.

Hel's head tilted in curiosity at the sudden change in the teenager. "Yes, as you continue down the path of a hunter, you'll become aware of certain powers that will be available at your disposal. Abilities such as the vast understanding of multiple tongues."

"Tongues?"

"Languages."

"How?"

"With experience comes knowledge." Hel stated sagely.

"You don't give a lot of straight answers, do you?"

"You're annoying." Hel responded before she exited through the same doors she came in. Hector followed behind her as his mind wandered. Without checking to see if Hector was paying attention or not, Hel created an inky purple portal to Midgard, the mortal realm. "It's about time to return to your world, Hectorâ€|" Hel rasped something in a different tongue.

Hector was still preoccupied with marveling his demon-hunting apparel and promise of powers to hear that last part. It wasn't until a chilling feel of sand snaked around his neck that he snapped out of it with a start.

The black sand with a conscious returned and played around Hector's neck before climbing to rest on his shoulder. Hector was about to ask Hel a question he'd been itching to ask, but the sand somehow spoke into his ear.

Having just got the power to understand universally any language and/or tongue, Hector peered up at his mentor and recited what he had translated, "I am ready to serve you to the best of my abilities, Lady Hel."

Hel's back was to the boy, watching something in the distance. When she heard him, she turned and nodded at the sand occupying Hector's shoulder. "Good. This is a new chapter of your life."

And with that, Hector's life as a bounty hunter for the goddess of death would now begin. Hector's mind racked with thoughts of what power he would discover first, and while immaturely, he reveled in different ways to utilize them at school.

"No. Not yet," Hel interrupted his excited thoughts. "First, you need to find your partner?"

"Partner?"

"Yes, every hunter has a partner," Hel informed him knowingly, turning away from him back to whatever caught her interest before.

"Like a dog or something?" Hector inquired with an amused tone.

Hel knew she should've corrected him with a warning not to demean his future partner, but the saying resurfaced. 'With experience comes knowledgeâ€|'

"Or somethingâ€|"

* * *

><p>Stars away, in a realm that hosted gods and goddesses, at peak of the golden capital, a king awoke from his annual sleep. The light

that was preserved to protect the king went out like a blown candle. Servants were immediately alerted and awaited him outside the doors. But the king didn't emerge from his room at first like he usually did. The fact that he had woken up earlier than anticipated worried not only his followers but the ruler himself.<p>

It was then that a vision projected solely on his left eye, where the decorated patch lay. The scene that the king witnessed suddenly got him on his feet, pushing open the doors and briskly walking down the hall as he turned to a handmaiden. "Call my champions to the throne room at once!"

The queen, arriving as soon as she witnessed the eternal light go out, arrived just as the handmaiden left with her instructions. "What has happened, my King? Why do you walk the halls before you are fully rested?" When she received no answer, she turned to dismiss the servants.

It wasn't the last soul turned a corner did the King nurse his head before he suddenly reached out to grab onto a hold as he lurched from fatigue. His queen shouldered his weight and raised him back up. Nodding at the queen for her assistance, the King stood straighter on his own and stated grimly, "The Author has returned. And I fear he has brought another realm to his ranks."

"Of the Nine?" The queen inquired.

"Niflheim."

* * *

><p>Notes:<p>

Midgard: Earth (Land of Men)

Niflheim: The Underworld (Land of the Dead)

2. Shared History

Chapter Two - History Lesson

* * *

><p>Unknown Time of the Past - Unknown World

_The bitter luck of the Night Furies! _Her last kill gave away her position in the deep brush; she had to move now else the Queen learns of her location. Or worse, the lumbering Horned-helms that boast equality for their poached prizes come her way. Anyway, the prey she'd caught let out an exasperated yelp before crossing over to the Underworld. Now she had to go back to hiding instead of her day tasks of balancing out the souls of this world. Admittedly, that slip-up was her own fault. But arrogantly, that _boy _had to have some fault in the de-escalation of her prowess. She would not be blamed for everything. Especially not in her own backyard.

It wasn't easy at all to be a Night Fury in the world of her own species or the humans. Both sides wanted nothing more than to brand her black scaly hide for ownership. Not willing to admit anything to

her distant father, but he might've relayed some sense in leaving the Realm of Man. The only two choices of survival for her kind were feed the Queen or are tamed by the men. Neither option was very dignifying.

Movement ahead.

Sinking lower to the ground, the supposedly extinct female waited for the search party to pass so she could resume searching for her ever risky partner. The teenager was testing her nerves greatly. The boy should've already been to this area, breathing his peace treaties to make sure no trouble would come nosing in in her very important business.

The movement came running past the brush the dragon was currently crouching in. The burly men and women had reduced to cooing and calling with gentle invitations to join their endearing way of life. Yes, all with their hands safely on hovering over their weapons and dangerously swinging around their torches. These missionaries, the boy deemed them, couldn't lure a fish with bait in hand. No sane creature would approach humans, let alone obvious poachers.

Gods, all of her stressful nights hunting came when the boy tried shooting her down in a last ditch effort to mate with his pet dragon. There's a reason why no living soul has seen a female Night Fury. We're actively hiding from our kind and theirs to get away from a life of servitude. No, she refused to be forced to produce another generation of bootlickers and soldiers.

Her newly-acquired life suited her just fine. Kill a few mortals and send their souls to the dead realm. But no, that boy had to bring her right back into a life of hiding, swinging. Speaking of annoyances, he had found her, but had yet to give her indication of his location perched up on the tree above her. Ready to playfully pounce her and offer that Gods-awful humor of his. What was it, he called it? Sarcasm?

It doesn't matter. She either made the deadline by the next full moon or go back to her old life of popping eggs with a strange male. No, Hel refused to go back to a life of hiding.

* * *

><p>Present

Well, when Hector finally arrived at his house via demented portal, his father really let him have it. Although, the punishments weren't too bad. No computer? How would he do his homework? How about no driver's license for three months? Sure, dad, but which nonexistent car key should I hand over? That's it, go straight to school and come straight home—Oh, and your curfew has been shortened too! In the end, all of his father's punishments were contradicted with the simple fact that Hector wasn't like most teenagers and couldn't be effectively punished like one. But Hector wouldn't dare admit this while his father was lecturing him. Hector would bet money that his father was calling his uncle and gym coach, to plot how to penalize Hector.

Anyway, it was the weekend as Hector got up to do the morning yard work. But as soon as he whipped the covers off himself and made to

stand up, the floorboards disappeared and Hector felt himself falling. Then he felt something pull him up before he went splat at the bottom. Landing abruptly on his tail end, Hector discovered that the warm morning light was replaced by inky darkness, and that only meant that he was summoned without so much as a heads-up.

Holding his rattled head, Hector tried and failed to adjust himself after the sudden fall through the portal to Niflheim. As blind as ever, Hector found himself being ushered towards a door by the familiar feel of sand that appeared as soon as he came flying in. Coming upon a door, he entered, and stopped when he caught sight of his charge.

The queen of the Underworld grew bigger since Hector's last visit. Towering on a throne that could've have been taller than a water tower, Hel's now gargantuan form sat and peered down at him, waiting for his eyes to adjust to the darkness before speaking.

"Earlier this new day, several of the spirits I mentioned yesterday ripped open a portal and set foot in Midgard. -"

"Wait, what? I thought they already escaped yesterday? Have they been in this place the whole time?"

"Yes, they have. Allow me to reiterate how they escaped; do you know why it is as dark as midnight in this land?" Hel asked rhetorically. "Because every soul that has been hunted, purged, and then sent to my realm has been 'asleep' since then. I watch over them as they sleep, adjusting small errors their mind instinctively tries to process to wake them up from the trances I create."

Hector began nodding his head, slowly understanding. "So waking up means that they escaped the mind prison you made for them." Receiving a nod in agreement, Hector continued, "Does that mean they beat you in a brain battle or something?"

Hel frowned at the boy's sudden descent from logic to simple thinking. "No, another entity delved into their psyche and released them from their muse." Hel rested her chin onto her tightly bound fist in thought. "But that is impossible. I would surely have been alerted of an intruderâ€¦"

"Do you know when this guy could've come in and awaken them?" Hector supplied. "Or how they could've been hiding for so long without you knowing?"

The queen didn't like admitting any faults with the boy around, so she chose to ignore his questions. "The only possible situation that could happen is if I was either outside of this realm or," Hel suddenly locked eyes on Hector's, "inside another's inner mind." Solving her current problem, Hel stood from her throne, towering over Hector, and started to walk towards him.

Either it was magic or an illusion, but the closer Hel got to Hector the more she reduced in height and mass. It wasn't until she appeared to be at the same height from yesterday that she stood in front of the boy. "No matter of this revealing predicament. You have your first mission to deal with." A wave of her hand elicited a magic spell behind Hector.

The light from the spiraling portal illuminated the both of them as they stood in front of it. It was then that Hector noticed that he was already donned in his soul-hunting outfit. _When did Iâ€|?_

"This realm appears to be his favorite for obvious reasons you will soon discover," Hel turned to face Hector. "You will need to find him and convince him to come back with you in the time your mind has allotted for your soul." Hel held her hand up to cease the beginning of many questions. "It's a time limit of sorts that your mind will create before your body and soul merge with this realm's surroundings." Hel noticed the blank stare she was receiving from Hector. Having somehow lost him in translation, Hel tried once more to explain with a history lesson.

"As you know, you a mortal of Midgard; the world of men. A human." Hel got a nod in understanding. "As a human, the ever-evolving mortals, your kind has adapted to your surroundings for centuries. You inadvertently take the essence of a world, absorb it, and analyze it to work with your own strengths. For another _weltanschauung _example, remember back to how easily you donned the hunter armor and spoke a language just by hearing it uttered to you. This trait that I have discovered is partially the reason why I've been using humans as bounty hunters for so long."

"But I warn you, Hector. This realm is the polar opposite of Midgard. The order of nature you've come to know from your home world will not aid you in your venture to this land. Venture swiftly, find your partner, bring him back, and nothing else, do you understand me?" Hel ordered, her undertones held alarm and slight worry for the mission she's forced to give Hector.

"Yeah." Hector was witnessing a new side the queen. He wouldn't dare speak his thoughts, but Hel was sounding a lot like a concerned mother about to see him off to a war overseas. "But what does he look like? How will I know if it's him or her? Do you have a picture of, a painting of him or something?" Hector knew that Hel couldn't just give him his partner's social media page, but maybe a more solid description would be helpful.

"He's one of a kind." Hel supplied, her lips twitching into a small smile.

Hector couldn't argue for a better clue as he slipped on the sand underneath him and fell through the portal. The trip to another realm was very short, quicker than Hector thought it would. Hurtling headfirst into the entrance of the negative world, Hector shielded himself as he tumbled through various tree branches before grabbing hold of a sturdy branch that could hold his sudden weight. Swing his leg over the branch, Hector managed to perch himself up and take in his surroundings.

For a moment, Hector thought Hel was joking with him. Hyping him up to go on a dangerous mission just for him to find out she'd sent him into his own backyard. But the queen didn't strike Hector as one that would prank him for fun. Or having the word in her dictionary.

It was all forest like back home. Trees, a few more bushes. Down below him was a barely visible fog just above the ground. Unsure of the forest floor, the only thing Hector could make out was a

painful-looking rock at the base of this tree.

Suddenly it felt like a freezing slap across Hector's back, an icy feeling running up his spine. He lost his balance and fell right towards the boulder at the bottom. Without a thought, Hector used the tree as a foot place and bounded off it. Instead of the rock, Hector landed in wet shrubs, luckily one without thorns or thistle.

Reeling from the shock of whatever snuck up behind him, Hector sat up from his laid out position only to find out that he was surrounded. Surrounded by

"Dragons"

* * *

><p>"I'm going out!" Teddy yelled over his shoulder before slamming the backdoor behind him. He could be seen running across the backyard off into the woods with a large duffel bag slung over his shoulder. The last retreating glimpse of him was decked with green camouflage clothing.<p>

His mother was about to shout after him about slamming the doors but instead she turned to the eldest of her twins. "Where does he go off to every weekend?" Audrey Thompson asked herself more than she did her daughter as she turned back to filing her documents on her work laptop.

"I don't know and I really don't care." Ronnie answered gruffly from the office den. Apparently, her scores hadn't improved as much as either his mother or Frankie would've liked so now she was stuck doing extra credit on the weekend. "How come he doesn't have to do boatloads of homework on the weekends?" Ronnie muttered lowly.

"Oh, stop it. It's only a couple more pages of math before you're done for the weekend."

"You'd be surprised how much material could fit on just one page." Ronnie exasperatedly sighed, dramatically stretching all over the couch, hoping to earn an ultimatum from her mother to get away from the assignments.

Audrey emerged from behind her computer to give Ronnie a tired stare. "Veronica, either you finish your work or take a break to go find out where your brother stalks off to every other week. Which one will it be?"

"The second choice." Ronnie piled all of her scrap work and shut the textbook loudly. The two were not her first choice, but it didn't matter. Even if Ronnie went after her younger twin, she'd probably just find Teddy poking road kill or something. Besides, how would her mother know where she goes from there? No, Ronnie could catch a movie or go to the mall with Heather and Cameron.

Sliding the patio door behind her, gently for her the sake of further getting on her mother's nerves that day, Ronnie turned to take a shortcut through the forest to the bus stop. But suddenly, a flash a light flared somewhere in the deep brush a ways ahead of her. It was strange because any flashing shouldn't have been that visible in the middle of a sunny day. Doing a quick search for the skies, Ronnie

ventured into the woods.

Regretting her decision to actually step foot in a forest she had no sense of direction in, Ronnie found herself lost in the brush. Going back wasn't an option because she accidentally ran into a rather large spider web and still had the scary feeling that something was crawling on her. No, she wouldn't go back and risk more webs to be tangled in her hair or, worse, a creepy crawler. It didn't take long for her to stumble into a clearing and witness her brother sign away his life to some raven-haired man in green robes. Instinctively thinking her twin was in danger she ran towards the two blindly. The green man noticed her first with an expression of bemusement while Teddy underwent a transformation.

Ronnie stopped in her tracks and watched with anxiety the new form Teddy took.

* * *

><p>Asgard

A halcyon of peace and observation, a golden passage to other worlds, the amber knight and transporter. Various titles and honors to the Bifrost and its keeper. At the edge of the realm of gods, the legendary artifact and her guardian watch over the Nine Realms and send help to those in distress. But as of late, the two souls have had trouble connecting to the universe by sight. Their sense of awareness is being clouded by an unknown rift in nature.

Heimdallr, the 'whitest of all gods' and guardian of the Bifrost, could see any and everything that transpired in the universe. Attuned hearing of thoughts, seer of events, and receiver of praying thoughts. So why couldn't he see the latest escape from Niflheim, the champions stationed in Midgardâ€| and the assassin traveling towards his post at the Bifrost at impossible speeds, about to arrive with their sole purpose of distracting him from all of these revealing events.

"Hah!" Heimdallr withdrew his sword from the sheathe and cut the seemingly empty air to his left.

Expectedly, a demon hissed in surprise and pain. The assassin had been warned earlier not to underestimate the all-seeing guardian, but she'd just transported in and has already received an ugly scratch down her right arm. Licking her wound, she scowled at the golden god. Admittedly disagreeing with her leader's plan to make her just the distraction, she knew the merit in it as the scratch onto her flawless skin would soon be avenged.

A massive cloud of smoke started surrounding the amber transporter, closing out any light or hope of allies. Soon, the only light that could reflect of Heimdallr's armor was the source of the Bifrost itself, ever spinning in the center of the expanse. But even that was quickly covered over by the increasing mass of clouding smog. The room appeared to be motionless safe for the revolving pair of demonic eyes glaring at the armored god.

"Was it you that rendered me blind to the rest of the universe, unknown Vanr?" Heimdallr clutched his weapon closer to his chest.

"Vanir." The unknown adversary corrected with dual voices.

In the darkness, Heimdallr's eyes widened slightly. Although, the pollution was blocking out his awareness of the outside world, there were still leaking prayers that he could hear despite losing his sight. A quick glimpse into a random prayer and he instantly knew what was going on in the Land of Men. There were agents there to ward off evil spirits, but the presence of an unstoppable force had just arrived with a gathering. _Noâ€|_ Heimdallr suddenly brought down the tip of his blade onto the inky substance blocking out the light of the Bifrost.

Reading Heimdallr's thoughts and anticipating what his next actions would be, tendrils of darkness shot out to restrain the god. "Yes. Our leader has arrived to the return of a long-lost legendâ€| the legendary bounty hunter that achieved omnipotence centuries ago."

"I'll be taking my leave now. Terror, you have your orders." A purple vortex manifested to Heimdallr's right. He realized that a second being had arrived later than the first one he struck down. She was now leaving! Abandoning his sword, Heimdallr broke out of his restraints and rushed for the portal. He hadn't the slightest clue where it leads- behind enemy lines where he could be quickly subdued- but there nothing he could do in a trapped Bifrost. And there were plenty of hidden passages to other worlds. One just had to know where to look, and this god has had millennia of learning every crook and nanny of the universe to make him qualified.

But has he came within distance of touching the rippling portal, he was snatched back by invisible arms and slammed onto the wall. Suddenly grunting in anguish, the golden god found himself gutted by his sword. "Hrng!" Having his resolve tested, Heimdallr gripped the guard of his sword and pulled, fighting against the lingering demon keeping him pinned by his own weapon.

"How foolish of you, Vanity. You gave our prisoner a chance to escape. No wonder _He _wouldn't let you do this mission alone." The dual voices mocked in unison from above the two.

Vanity audibly growled at her partner openly taunting her while in the presence of their prisoner. "Take care not to choke on your own arrogance, Terror." Without waiting for their banter to continue, Vanity fell through the portal. Her next assignment was aware of her presence at the spinning dome, but chose not to come. She decided to follow him, opting out to stalk him instead of spending another moment with her unnerving partners.

Relishing the contained grunts from their prisoner, Terror pressed the sword deeper into Heimdallr's abdomen as they continued to blind him from the outside world. Finally crying out his apparent discomfort, Heimdallr received yet another prayer. One from an ally in Asgard. At the end of the message, Heimdallr tried desperately to relay urgency to halt his sender's quest for the truth.

The sword now twisted his insides and Heimdallr roared out in anguish for the situation he found himself in. No one could hear him. Not even his King could watch over in this accursed darkness.

* * *

><p>Midgard (Earth)

Teddy wasn't the only one venturing out into the supernatural woods this weekend it seemed, Ash had just finished packing before she opened the window and moved to jump out. But then the doorbell rang.

"Ashley, you have a visitor!"

Reluctant to ignore her mother and leave for her weekend retreat, Ash climbed back into her room and tossed her pack by the windowsill. Although she already prepared a schedule for this weekend and wanted to keep loyal to it, a part of her was curious as knowing who could've gotten her address and why they knocked on her front door.

At the bottom of the steps, Ash saw the hopeless teenager from yesterday's flop at school. _Why was he here?_ Flashed briefly passed her mind. By the looks of it, he didn't know why he was there either, but when Ash got closer she saw something in his hand.

"Ashley, Stewart here has been nice enough to come over and offer some itching remedy his mother got for him." Her mother, Diana Hofferson, clarified for the both of them. Stewart twitched a little before mechanically holding up his purpose for being in her home up to Ash. "How thoughtful. I was going to get some at the pharmacy after a trip to the market, but I have to admit, I wouldn't know which brand would be betterâ€|" Ash's mother started wondering out loud a list of different brands of itching solvents. But Ash wasn't paying attention; she was already heading back upstairs to get her pack, leaving a stunned Stewart holding up his failed offering.

"Oh, Ashley, why don't you let Stewart here tag along with you this weekend? I'm sure another pair of eyes in that forest would be better than going alone." Diana plucked the ointment out of Stewart's hand before turning to put it in the bathroom's medicine cabinet. "I believe I have some spare bedrolls and supplies in this closet for you, Stewart." She called from somewhere in the house.

Stewart snapped back to attention when his name was called. "T-thanks!" He didn't know whether stay there with a growingly irritated Ash or try to locate her mother. The latter deemed more tempting than having a glaring contest with Ash as Stewart moved to trace Diana's voice. Before he knew it, he was shoved against the front door.

"Why are you here?"

Stewart sputtered for an answer, but instead held up his jar of ointment. Ash smacked the bottle from his hands pressed harder to encourage him for a verbal answer. Why was he here? Stewart's mind raced searching for something to say. "I thought you could use some. It took me a whole night of showering and nothing worked until my mom got me this stuff. Now there's no itch, see?" Stewart scratched his armpits and immediately regretted making a fool of himself. He'd might as well look like a chimp.

Ash eyed him for a moment before deeming his answer decent enough.

For now. "Did you offer this miracle itching cream to Hector?" Ash released Stewart to pick up the itching cream.

Relieved to be freed, Stewart locked eyes with Ash suddenly. Why bring up Hector? Did she have it out for him already? They only said a few sentences to each other yesterday. He could see the guarded look in her eyes so he softened his piercing stare. "No," Stewart noted no changes in her stance, "Why?"

"Alright, here we are." Diana handed the hiking gear to Stewart. "This pack should last the weekend out into the wilderness." She chuckled to herself, knowing that the two of them weren't hiking through a dangerous forest and could just as easily walk to the local mall at anytime. She scooted them out the door and wished the luck for the weekend in the forest.

Trudging around the house, into the backyard towards a trail into the forest, Ash stopped by the opening. "I'm going out here to train, and I don't need any bodyguards."

"Well, I'm not a licensed bodyguard." Stewart shrugged. "But I'm not about to let you go into the forest alone!" Stewart raised his voice.

Ash quirked a brow but soon realized that they had an audience of one. Her mother, making sure the two went into the forest together was observing them from the patio.

"Fine." Ash allowed herself to be followed for now, but once they were deep enough into the brush, she had to find a way to ditch him. The real reason Ash went out every weekend was to meet someone. And she didn't think it would be wise to bring a mortal in the affairs of gods and neither would Ash's master.

If only the two teenagers knew of the dangers that watched them, waiting for them to lead them to the hidden goddess of the forest. Their leader would be pleased when they report back the location of one of the agents stationed in Midgard. The demon allowed himself to grin wider at the possible thought of locating the Eldest champion. Oh joy, a demon could dream.

* * *

><p>Asgard

"Why are you awake?"

Odin thought over his next words carefully. This certain individual that asked him was resourceful if not a strange ally to have in the first place. As the other champions of Odin cast a look of annoyance towards the one who spoke out, Odin rested his chin onto his clasped hands. This person would follow his orders swiftly and keep his loyalty to the King no matter what, but the increasingly odd quirk this person had was beginning to test the ruler.

A god in his own right, Vali, god of vengeance was as loyal as they came. If not appearing devious. The figure sitting down at the other end facing Odin was bandaged from the crown of his head down to the soles of his feet. The god had no use for vanity in his line of work, but everyday like clockwork, he replaced the beige strips of cloth

for fresh ones. It could've been because they were dirtied easily after carrying out Odin's secret work, but every morning when he reported in for a debriefing, he came striding anew.

Vali was Odin's jack of trades when it came to various covert missions Odin kept from his other followers, even his Queen. The secrecy each mission had was so fragile; Vali was the only one who wouldn't question Odin's sanity. For example, the assassination of Hodur, the one believed to have killed Baldur.

Alas, the only quirk that smudged Vali's part in anything was that Vali would do just as Odin would ask with no objections, but the god needed all the information before he would even budge to complete his assigned objective. As a matter of fact, Vali could listen and recite all of the information Odin would brief him with but still have a series of questions left over for his King. Not that he was persistent with his inquiries but he did have a great memory when it came to questions that were politely ignored.

Even though Vali's questions made the other champions irritated, some couldn't help but also inquire why their King was awake before his rest was complete. The god of justice, Forseti, reinforced Vali's curiosity asking, "I agree with Vali's ratherâ€ blunt query, my King. Why have you awoken so early? Has there been an abnormality in the Nine Realms?"

"Obviously, our King has had one of his visions." Another god sniffed indignantly at the still young god in Odin's defense. God of wisdom, Vor, never seemed to let anyone attending any and all meetings forget of his vast knowledge and will not hesitate to correct them. But he did seem to watch Forseti closer than anyone else at the meeting due to his naive stature. "Said vision was strange enough to awaken our King to alert us."

Forseti made to respond, but the god of war, Tyr, brought his fist down to silence the soon to be banter between the two. "Who cares of the 'why'! 'What' are we going to do next to engage this new enemy?! And 'when' do we depart?!" Strangely, the god's aged chain metal became stressed with every bulge of muscle following each syllable.

"How do you know this new development is a physical enemy you may rage on with your fists and not just a rift in nature in one of the Realms?" Vor baited the barbaric champion in hopes that another outburst would be enough to have him thrown out for disrupting the meeting.

"What did you say, you pompous weasel?!" Tyr spun his wild eyes over at Vor, daring him to insult him openly once more.

"Calm down, Tyr. He's baiting you. Besides, the real issue is that of-" Iounn, goddess of youth, tried to maintain order.

"Bah! Why our King made a woman a champion is beyond me!" Tyr barked at the goddess across the table from him.

"Her fruit is what keeps you alive, you imbecileâ€|" Vor sighed in boredom.

"How dare you question her skills, you brute! " Forseti defended

Iounn's honor.

"Another insult too many!" Tyr stood so suddenly his chair fell behind him with a loud thud. He placed his foot onto the table and unsheathed his axe from his back. This action caused most of those across the table of him to witness his modesty scantily hidden by his war loin clothes. "Your pelts will make excellent new loin cloths!"

"Ew." Iounn definitely wanted no part of this conversation now.

At the end of the large table, Odin's eyes flickered back and forth as his champions bickered amongst themselves with a neutral expression. Although, his brows twitched at Tyr's choice of words for a threat. In truth, this gathering of heroes before him was the leftovers of champions that weren't already on a mission. It was an ill-timed meeting to hold with the four of them together in the same room though. Maybe Odin should've just stayed in bed and let Heimdallr handle what was going on by informing the agents in Midgard. But this was no time for second-guessing his decision. With the thump of Gungnir against the marble floors, the ruler of gods received the attention of all his followers.

All those around him were his champions because of their attributes were that of his not too long ago. War, poetry, justice, and rather adamant to admit, age. He kept his magic and wisdom abilities, but it was logical to have another's thoughts noted at these meetings. "I have gathered you all here today because, yes, we face an enemy that threatens the balance of the Nine Realms. The Author, my grandfather, has returnedâ€|"

Collective gasps surrounded the table. Even Tyr appeared apprehensive at this new development. While the war-mongering god was known for his battles, he only wanted this one ended before it evolved into a long one. Vali, having his questions somewhat answered, departed immediately for Midgard. Odin's eldest champion must be informed of their returned adversary. As Vali flew down from the capital, he thought of all his collected notes and history on Buri, Odin's grandfather, god of prehistory. The first god.

Landing in the streets of the market close to the capital, Vali delved deeper into his photogenic memory. By the way Odin announced his relatives return, it seemed to Vali as if Odin was going to say _again. _As if this wasn't the first time Buri has returned or the eldest god wasn't in Asgard.

Stop. Three things came to mind as Vali froze mid-step located in the second ring outside of the capital.

1.) If Buri was alive, where had he been this whole time? 2.) Why was this feeling of trepidation increasing as he neared the Bifrost? 3.) Would Heimdallr have the answers to Vali's extraordinary questions? Would he answer Vali?

Even thinking like this answered one of Vali's questions. There was something afoot in Asgard and he dared not expose himself to the elements at play here until he spoke with his Eldest champion. He'd been in this game too long not to feel something off. His King had the power to strip him and throw away the key quietly while Heimdallr would likely report him immediately to their King after sending him

off to some unknown world. Neither choice for extracting information was ideal.

No. He'd need to find the answers to his questions from a being as old as Odin, but wasn't loyal to the current ruler of Asgard.

The Underworld. This was ideal since Vali needed to visit Midgard anyway. It seemed like a coincidence that those two realms would be so close together- Enough! Vali already had three burning questions on his mind right now. No need to add another mystery to the pile.

It was decided, Vali's destination was Midgard to hold a conference with his Eldest before going down to Niflheim to bargain for information with its queen. Resuming his walk to the Bifrost, Vali noted that he was being followed. After passing by some merchants carrying the head to a large taxidermy creature of some sort, Vali created a shadow of himself and turned down an alley. His clone would walk towards the Bifrost as Vali took to the shadows to use another means of transportation to Midgard.

As Vali quietly snuck through the vermin ring of the capital, he worried for Heimdallr. Earlier, he was alerted of some sort of physical danger looming over the location of the white god. But instead of investigating this, Vali reluctantly hoped that it would spare as a distraction so the guarding knight would be too preoccupied with this threat to file a search for Vali once he disappeared from Asgard.

_Forgive me, Heimdallr. But my loyalty to our King's command has been questioned by the arrival of an unknown threat. I hope you can understand, and may Odin watch over you in your upcoming fight. _Vali sent his message mentally, knowing Heimdallr could hear each champion's attuned thoughts. After a few moments, Vali came upon the border of the capital, a simple railing that held most away from plummeting into the rushing water below. Securing the burgundy robes he acquired on his way out, Vali pulled the hood over and jumped over the edge to take flight towards the rocky walls outside the city bounds. Inside one of the openings, a portal awaited to the Realm of Man.

Disregarding Vali's leave, Odin continued, "â€|Buri has not only returned, but has a small army with him. My arisen brothers and a select few taken from Hel. Vanir, to be exact, Hela's most prized trophies."

Vor massaged the bridge of his nose as he realization for what they'll soon to be facing. "Why couldn't it have been the latterâ€|? Just a rift in nature?" Asking no one in particular.

* * *

><p>Unknown World

"Dragonsâ€|" Despite their colorful scales, Hector felt that this revelation could mean that they were friendly. Especially by the way their glares burned into him. These weren't the traditional dragons Hector researched for his ancient Chinese folklore report back in eighth grade, but for some reason the word dragons came to mind as he found himself surrounded.

"â€|a Haddock, nonetheless." Hector didn't quite catch the rest of the sentence, the beginning part hisses and yips; he was still surprised he understood the dragons around him. Then he remembered that he now had that ability. Hearing that he was being addressed again, but from behind, Hector whipped his head around, facing an inky black-scaled dragon with terrifyingly acid green eyes.

The unknown specie studied him despite the closeness. Exhaling a hot breathe through his nostrils onto the boy's face, the dragon brought down the boy with one of his paws. Feeling the boy squirm underneath his palm, the obsidian creature barked orders to the other dragons and before Hector knew it, he was unconscious.

â€|

Awaking with a start, Hector sat up and was promptly denied by the force of a dragon's paw. Trying to sit up once more, Hector was physically told not to. "Is this how you treat all your visitors, or did I the only one that caught your eye?" Hector stalled as he looked around the rather bare enclosure. The black dragon pressed down on the boy's forehead as if to say, 'Don't get up', before it lurked away from him to the opposing wall, lying down and facing the boy from across the single source of light. A candle was the only thing illuminating the two as it shone dimly.

From what Hector could see, he was in some sort of room made of stone. As he squinted his eyes, he found that there was either no exit cum entrance and it was as if they were underground or there purposely wasn't enough light to make an escape.

"Why did Hel send you here, soul-reaping Bounty Hunter Hector Haddock, age 16?"

Hector lost the humor. This person, err, dragon knew about Hel, his powers, and his own name. Hector became irritated that he still knew nothing of this dragon and even more so of the fact that he had a time limit and this guy was keeping him prisoner. "You're going to have to buy me dinner first."

"You think this is a game? Are you ignorant of your current predicament?" The dragon narrowed its eyes.

With no chance of escape, any witty remarks, or a plan to defeat the dragon in front of him, Hector decided to get it over with. "I'm looking for my partner. Hel said I'd need someone to train me to fight the prisoners that escaped Niflheim." No longer caring of the repercussions, Hector sat up and leaned against the wall to face the dragon. If the creature was an enemy, it would've already killed him when he was surrounded.

The dragon seemed to be listening to Hector with understanding, but as soon as Hector finished, it growled before getting up to prowl towards him. "I warned you, human. I don't want to hear liesâ€|" The dragon's claws seem to extract with every step it took forward. "Do you expect me to believe that not just one, but several, prisoners escaped the land of mist without their queen being alerted?" The dragon's patience wore thin; he blew out the candle and seemingly vanished from the room. "Rot in here." Were it's parting words.

Ready to respond to get the dragon's attention back, Hector felt his head throb painfully. It started with a small wave but soon evolved to searing pulses. Hector hissed while cradling his head, his captor forgotten. This must be what Hel warned him about, the time limit.

Questions flooded his mind. Where is he? Why is it dark in here? Was he underground?! It didn't make sense, not of this did. Hector was just some junior. Why was he being thrusts into this supernatural world? Why him? There were so many questions he had, but he was surrounded by darkness in a world he couldn't hope to understand or adapt toâ€|

Adapt!

The pain ceased as soon as Hector heard someone whisper into his ear. Adapt. An ancient power of man was the only piece of advice he's received since coming to this world. Grateful for the absence of the headache, Hector concentrated solely on the word, 'adapt'.

Goal?

Bemused at who could've been talking to him, Hector quickly responded else he lose his only ally in this mess. Getting out of wherever he was alive seemed a good a goal as any at the moment. He sent the mental thought to whoever could've been listening. For a moment, nothing happened. Then it happened. The unnerving feel of something crawling on him. A sensation he was familiar with.

The sand that seemed to be a part of him slithered up his spine to rest on Hector's shoulder. Despite not having a physical mass or visible brain, the sand radiated comfort and protection as it wrapped around Hector's torso.

"Are you the oneâ€|?" Hector didn't care if he looked silly for talking to sand; he felt that he could trust it. Especially since it wasn't that dragon from earlier, but a friend in all this chaos. "Were you the one that read my mind?"

But the sand wasn't, well, listening to Hector. It was spreading to not only all of his chest, but Hector's whole body. As it crept up Hector's neck to cover his head, Hector started panicking and reached to remove the advancing sand. As Hector was about to touch it, he felt the sand stop.

Trust.

What? Trust the sand that got me into all this mess? Surely, it's justifiably that Hector was skeptical of the request. The sand seemed to sense this and relayed hurt. It started to sink away from Hector's body. "Wait!" It waited for a moment. Hector was at a crossroads with himself. Trust the sand that killed a man in front of him and kidnapped him or let it go away and try to escape on his own? And if he did choose to go solo, Hector couldn't imagine how he'd fare against the dragon for a few minutes ago. Yes, the sand was terrifying, but Hector couldn't ignore that he felt attached to the obsidian dust as it wrapped around him protectively.

Moreover, the possibility of dying in a place no one would find him hit Hector like an invisible force. 'Rot in here' were the dragon's last words. "Please" Hector was in a vulnerable state of mind and he didn't have a choice. He had to choose the lesser of two evils before his time ran out. "I need to trust you to get me out of this place. Can you promise me that?"

Before he knew it, Hector felt unfathomable waves of reassurance that he was in good hands. Without warning, the sand reattached itself and spread across his whole body. But when it got to Hector's neck it paused. Sensing no resistance, the sand consumed the rest of Hector's body, covering the back of his head before his face. Hector believed that once he was shrouded by the sand, he'd have to hold his breathe. Surprisingly, when he ran out of breathe; he realized that he could breathe despite his head being surrounded by sand.

_Escape. _It sounded as if the sand was asking if Hector was ready. Without thinking, Hector nodded. Then the sand transformed him. Hector felt his body compress into a ball before dropping to the floor. Extremely disorientated, Hector resisted the urge to throw up on the floor; the floor he was currently sliding across. This was a new feeling to get used to.

After gaining somewhat control of where he slid, Hector's eyes adjusted to the darkness and he could finally see everything was in the enclosed area. This wasn't much. Aside from the candle, the mat Hector woke up on, and a timeworn spot where the dragon lay, there wasn't anything extraordinary of his prison. That was, until, he spotted a crack in the _corner. _Not liking his chances, Hector decided to try to exercise his new power by squeezing through the opening.

â€

A gathering of the elder draconic creatures took place just outside the wall of the underground burrow acting as a prison for their latest visitor. In the center of the circle lay the black dragon waiting to be held under judgment for his recent actions. The black dragon encircled himself with his own unique fire as he lay there, with his head down, contemplating his prisoner's words.

A large gray dragon with wilting scales and a bronze crown atop his head spoke of his disapproval towards the ebony dragon's decision to bring the intruder so deep into their home.

"What merit is there to keep a human here? You know their kind and that annoying ability of theirs."

A wide creature, amber in scales, razor sharp wings and appendages, nodded in agreement at the elder dragon's statement. "Req is right, we must send him back from whence he came, else he sabotages our world with his curious touch."

"Suggest all you want, brothers; no action will be taken until I say so." The black dragon stared down the lesser opposing wyverns, daring them to join in to veto his command.

"You may have survived your species, Tharion, but we will not allow you to extinct our brothers and sisters." Req straightened before stalking over to the center to tower over Tharion.

Tharion, the last Night Fury in this world, didn't rise to the challenge. He only kept eye contact with the self-proclaimed leader of the rebellion. Some found Tharion's dull reaction has a sign of disrespect, but others knew that Night Furies weren't known for their versed mannerism. "Are you, a tired immortal, going to challenge me?"

Req lowered to the ground and growled at the blunt insult. "I will remind you of your place, soldier-servant!"

Tharion's ear twitched suddenly. Not because of the derogative title, but because of what was coming their way. And fast at that. Jumping to his feet, Tharion flew a distance away just as the wall of the mountain exploded. Perching himself on the tree, Tharion watched with great interest what could've caused the disruption. Not having to wait long, his eyes narrowed once he identified the disturbance.

Hector found himself, yet again, surrounded by dragons. But this time, he felt like he was ready to fight. Fearing ever returning to the prison he escaped, Hector morphed back into his original state and got ready to fight for his life. He'd die before going back in there. His accomplice, the sand, read his feelings and agreed wholeheartedly. In a way.

"The traitor has conspired with the human! The pair has gathered us to slay our kind, the accursed fallen!" Req flapped his wings as to add to his dramatics.

Overgrown molten pile ofâ€¦ Tharion hissed in annoyance how easily Req persuaded the others to believe that blatant lie. Despite his reputation for being 'rude', his kind was loyal to no end. Req disgraced his ancestors effortlessly. The thought of slashing the wilted elder came to mind, but Tharion paused to watch to see what the bounty hunter's next move would be.

Goal reached. Adapt? The sand stated before requesting what their next move would be.

Adapt to what? Fight our way out is the only option. Hector sent the thought loud and clear as he ran towards the supposed leader. The supposed leader, Req, was too busy riling his followers to notice the attack until it was too late. Once in striking range, Hector punched the abdomen of the dragon. Imagine the shared surprise of the two when Req was forcefully sent hurtling into the trees. Cracks and crashes were heard until Req slid to a halt, unconscious.

Shaking his fist, Hector was amazed at the power he had. When he peered down at his fist to see any damage, he learned that he was still covered in sand. He added it together and guessed that his newfound power came from the sand. To confirm, he asked, "When I said adapt to fight, did you boost my abilities?"

_Trust. _

Hector smirked at the one word answers he earned from the black sand. It was simple. And in this new world he adopted himself in, simple was good. Feeling the earth shake beneath him brought him back to the battlegrounds as he narrowly side-stepped away from being sliced to

ribbons. Hector was about to reprimand the sand to give him a warning next time, but he kept it to himself. As helpful as the sand was, Hector shouldn't rely on it too much. He had to bring his own skills to the table. Eight years of fighting video games, to be exact.

Jumping away from another slash, Hector jumped onto the wing and ran up the appendage before jumping up to deliver a kick to the dragon's snout, effectively dazing the creature enough to drop a knockout blow.

That was what Hector imagined doing, but in reality, he was barely dodging each slash by mere inches. It's not his fault, up until now, that's all he's been doing relying on his reflexes. Jumping away from the barrage, Hector thought back to what he did to the earlier dragon and started to think that the attack was the sand's and not his own. A few paces away, it registered to Hector that he was clearly outnumbered and the chances of getting out of this alive were dwindling.

A stray shot of blue crashed into the slashing dragon's head, bringing the blindsided creature down for the count. The other beasts scanned the area for the assailant only to find that nighttime was befalling. One beast started cowering in place, knowing that the traitorous Night Fury preyed best in this element. Instinctively, the beasts fled, his brothers and sisters following closely behind until only the down dragon was left.

Sighing in relief, Hector fell onto his backside and found out just how spent he was. He survived to fight another day. Well, maybe not fight. As the sand sunk away from his body, Hector felt fatigue replaced the power he once had. The sand curled up along Hector's shoulders. "Was that blue shot, you?" Hector inquired through mental link.

The sand didn't respond. It only dissolved into Hector's hood.

Hector felt ignored, but he gave the sand a break. It saved his life and he was grateful. Hector peered up at the stars, relaxing for the moment before he would start to wonder how to get back to Hel. Hector would count this mission as a failure. He hadn't come close to finding his partner, much less recruit him. Thinking of how Hel would take the news, Hector didn't even notice that Tharion had snuck up behind him and knocked him out.

Tharion grasped some of the boy's hood in his maw before spreading his wings to take flight. Spotting the suspending portal in a distance, Tharion winced at the thought of returned to the Underworld. He almost flinched and accidentally dropped the boy when he imagined the imminent conversation he would have with the queen of Niflheim.

Even if a majority of her memories were sewn into her clothing, Tharion had a feeling she'd still remember their past. Oh well, Tharion enjoyed living for the most part. Time to meet his makerâ€¦

Zooming through the portal, Tharion was caught by surprise as he was grabbed a massive hand. Lowered to make eye contact, Tharion audibly

gulped as he took in Hel's monumental form.

"Welcome back to my loving care, Tharion."

Tharion trembled in her hold as he was brought closer to her face. He knew of Hel's ability to give dreams to her prisoners, but what was about to transpire was one of Tharion's deepest nightmares! Tharion watched in horror as Hel opened her mouth, closed the distance between them and—!

"As punishment for your past crimes, Tharion!" Licked the infamous Night Fury.

Tharion howled in misery as being lapped up by the vile queen. "Cease your heinous acts of terror! I yield!"

With the commotion awaking the boy, Hector became thoroughly disturbed in guessing the past Hel and Tharion had. As the grooming continued, Hector thought, "Gee, I didn't feel like sleeping peacefully tonight!"

**(A/N) Let me start by saying that I've studied Norse Mythology for half an hour as apposed to you that has studied for all of half your life. I'll acknowledge any corrections some would have regarding the authenticity of this story's Norse Mythological figures, but I will not alter the story at all. What you read is what will stay regardless of a certain diehard scholar's professional advice. I do welcome advice on how some characters names are renowned for being spelt though. **

**This is my favorite fan fiction as to date and while I will have disclaimers in every featured chapter! This story is mine. Thank you. **

End
file.